

with lying because the FBI background check system would have revealed the truth.

I can state that I have the utmost confidence that if the Fix NICS law were in effect at the time he was attempting to purchase those firearms, in all likelihood, he would have been prohibited from purchasing those guns, and I would conclude from that, lives would have been saved, and the lives which were changed forever because of the terrible injuries that the other 20 received would not have been changed in such a terrible way.

I told myself at the time that I cannot go to another church service—we went to the church that met in a tent just down the street from the place where the shooting took place a week after the shooting. The pastor and his wife who lost their teenage daughter were there. The wife was distraught, as you can imagine. The pastor summoned a power that is greater than human power to preach that day. It was emotional, it was inspirational, but it was a terrible tragedy. I told myself that day that I never wish to look another family in the face and say we failed to do everything that was in our power to prohibit or to stop something like that from happening again.

Fix NICS, as I think people who are familiar with it understand, basically takes the laws that currently exist and makes sure it is applied so people like this shooter in Sutherland Springs can't lie their way out of it and get access to firearms and ruin people's lives in the process.

I realize it may not be as comprehensive as some people would like. The problem is around here, if you ignore the things you can agree on and just look to fight about things you can't agree on, nothing ever happens—no problems ever get solved. I think a good place to start would be to pass this bipartisan Fix NICS piece of legislation.

I hope our colleagues would consider it. I understand they have a different view on some aspects of guns, but what we had here was a catastrophic failure. We had a systemic failure. The school system failed, the mental health authorities failed, the local law enforcement, the Federal law enforcement failed. Our society failed to provide the tools to identify people who cry out, in essence, on social media like this young man did when he posted on YouTube essentially the threat he actually carried out, which was going to go shoot up a school. When that was referred to the FBI, they didn't follow up on it and nothing ever happened.

Looking back on this particular young man, he was sending signals out on a regular basis that he was a ticking timebomb and people were going to get hurt and potentially die, as they did.

I hope that rather than leave here this week with nothing to show for our efforts, we would at least agree to pass what enjoys broad bipartisan support and to perhaps prevent another shoot-

ing like that which occurred at Sutherland Springs.

The President has made clear, thinking now about the Las Vegas shooting, that he believes bump stocks ought to be regulated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. I agree with that. So those are two things we could do, perhaps, that might save lives in the future, but to just say it is not enough, we ought to do more, and to fail to do what is within our grasp, which we can agree to, to me, seems like a bizarre way of doing business, and I think it is an abdication of our responsibility.

I don't want to see another family who has lost a loved one as a result of one of these mass shootings that might be prevented by some action we might take on Fix NICS or the bump stock issue, for example.

There may be other things we need to do. We have done some things, such as trying to address the mental health challenges that people like Adam Lanza's mother had. Adam Lanza, the Sandy Hook shooter, was obviously mentally ill, but he wouldn't accept the treatment his doctor prescribed.

What we did last December—during the Obama administration—passed something called the 21st Century Cures Act, which included a bill I sponsored called the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act, which encouraged the use of assisted outpatient treatment. For example, if Adam Lanza's mother couldn't handle her son—he wouldn't take his medication or comply with doctor's orders—she could go to a civil court and essentially get a court order requiring him to comply with his doctor's orders and to take his medication.

Again, I am not suggesting that any one of these in isolation is a panacea, but there are things we can do step-by-step, bit-by-bit, to reduce the likelihood that these terrible mass shootings occur in the future.

TAX REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on another note, we heard some great news yesterday, in terms of our economy. Consumer confidence has jumped to a 17-year high. Optimism continues to surge as employers and payroll services across the country continue to implement the reforms to our Tax Code that we passed last December in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

What is more, the Treasury Department has now released the new withholding tables that went into effect earlier this month and reflect the changes passed as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

I got a call from someone close to me. I will leave it at that—I don't want to embarrass her—who said she opened her paycheck, and she had \$240 more in her paycheck than she had in the previous month as a result of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. She didn't regard this as crumbs; she thought it would make a positive difference in her life.

I think many Americans are having the same experience, seeing an increase in their take-home pay even in the month of February. As I said, for some, it is several hundred dollars extra each pay period, which is money that can be saved for a rainy day or invested for their retirement or future, or it could be used to pay for their child's education or to put new tires on their car. A married couple with two children, making about \$75,000 a year, will see an estimated tax cut of approximately \$2,000.

That is just on the individual side. What we are seeing across the country is greater than just what is happening to single families and households, though. It is good to see at the micro level or the personal level, so to speak, what the impact is, but we also have to see the bigger picture in terms of our economy, the jobs created, the investment opportunities, and the way to grow our economy, and the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has had a profound impact on that.

So far, at least 417 companies have announced new investments, pay raises, bonuses, and charitable contributions. They have added new employee training and increased contributions to pensions and 401(k) retirement accounts. According to the White House, more than 4.4 million workers have been positively affected. It is no wonder the tax law is becoming more and more popular as people have learned more about it. Even the New York Times has had to agree that the public is learning to love the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act because of the positive impact on hard-working American lives.

I see the wide-ranging effect of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in my State. Thanks to a competitive tax system, for example, Fort Worth-based companies like American Airlines paid large bonuses to their employees. AT&T, which is headquartered in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, paid \$1,000 to more than 200,000 men and women across the country who work for that company. Just as important, AT&T announced \$1 billion in capital investments, which could create as many as 7,000 jobs.

Texas also proves that the effects of tax reform are more than just a one-time-only impact. Waste Management, based in Houston, has already paid bonuses to drivers and landfill workers, but its CEO emphasized in an interview that the company will continue to spend money on its people beyond 2018. ExxonMobil, headquartered in Las Colinas in the Dallas area, will expand oil production in West Texas. Oncor, one of the largest investor-owned utilities in the State, will issue future refunds to customers on their utility bills. And Walmart, which is the largest employer in Texas, increased starting wages, expanded parental leave, and offered financial assistance to employees who choose to adopt.

It is not just the big players, though; small businesses are doing the same

thing. In Corpus Christi recently, I visited with the owners of Groomer's Seafood, who plan to expand distribution facilities serving thousands of restaurants statewide. American Bank in Corpus Christi is projecting that it can lend an additional \$120 million as a result of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. That is money it can lend to small businesses to grow or start a new business. In San Antonio, my hometown, Cox Manufacturing will move up construction of a new 8,000-square-foot plant. In Amarillo, up in the Panhandle of Texas, Happy State Bank made news to go with its name, which is higher hourly pay. In Lumberton, TX, the women running an engineering company called Leak Sealers paid tax savings forward to employees, calling on other businesses to do the same.

Our colleagues here in Washington who voted against the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act made a big mistake. I think they are beginning to realize that now, as the good news is rolling in. They have mostly kept quiet in terms of the criticism they lodged against the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act as we were debating it because they can't deny the facts, and they can't deny what is happening all across America—more take-home pay, more jobs, more money being invested and coming back home from overseas, and its generally being a very positive piece of legislation.

Some have said—like Ms. PELOSI—that the tax cuts we passed just help job creators and give crumbs to others, but that is not true. Individuals will benefit from lower rates across the board. They will see an increase in the standard deduction and the child tax credit too.

One overlooked part of the law will help bring investments and jobs to distressed communities, creating opportunity zones in every State. That is something our colleague Senator SCOTT championed and made sure was part of the bill.

So, Mr. President, amidst our pain, anguish, and the horror of terrible incidents like that which occurred in Parkland, FL, there is good news to be found, but it is hard to focus on the good news when our constituents are looking at us and asking what we are going to do to make sure that the next potential mass shooting is prevented and that we have done everything in our power to try to stop it. I am not sure we will be able to stop all of them, but we can stop some of them. We can make sure that incidents like that which occurred in Sutherland Springs, TX—that somebody who is already illegally disqualified from purchasing a firearm doesn't get their hands on one.

Well, we know what we have to do, and what I am asking all of our colleagues to do—including the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, who is a cosponsor of Fix NICS, along with the Republican majority leader—let's do this. Let's pass this bill. We could do it in one day, give people an opportunity to debate it and vote on it. If we

keep looking for the perfect and make sure that the perfect is somehow the enemy of the good, we will end up with nothing. But we can't end up with nothing. America deserves something that will make a difference. The people in Parkland, FL, and in Sutherland Springs, TX, deserve something better, and I believe that Fix NICS is the best place to start.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, we heard a whole lot about the tax bill the Republicans passed, and it basically works like this: We borrow \$1.5 trillion from our children and we give that money to the richest Americans. And then when there is a little bit of help for middle-class workers—and I mean a little—we say: Well, that is really cool.

I like that we are doing a little for the middle class, but I don't like the fact that for every dime to help a middle-class worker, we gave away a dollar to the richest Americans. In other words, America has been robbed in the biggest bank heist ever, and then it was justified by distributing a modest amount to our workers. Even then, they included a provision that will drive up the premiums for healthcare by more than 10 percent next year, on top of whatever rises are driven by the drug companies. So whatever modest gain there is for the middle class is wiped out by more expensive healthcare in America.

So we hear these big, sophisticated arguments: Oh, well, a worker here or there got a bonus. A worker here or there got their wages increased. But they don't tell you that they gave \$1 trillion to the richest Americans. Why not? Why not be honest about the whole entire scope of this tax rip-off, borrowing from our children to enrich the richest Americans?

As one House Member said, here is what this is all about: This is about the fact that my rich donors won't vote for me and won't support me in the next election unless I vote to give them all this money.

That is what happened here, and it is not OK because we see the consequences. We have a budget that attacks the foundations for families to thrive. It takes a trillion dollars out of healthcare. Well, that trillion dollars went to the richest Americans. Then the President gets to the budget and takes a trillion dollars out of healthcare, takes money out of affordable housing. Housing is a very important foundation for families to thrive. So it attacks healthcare and housing, and then it attacks public education.

Quite frankly, because all those resources were taken off the table that could have been invested in infrastructure and jobs in America, it also undermines the concept of a living-wage job, which is the principle that nobody who

works full time in America should live in poverty in America.

The majority has conducted the biggest bank heist in history, and they come to the floor and defend this time and time again without sharing the honest facts with the American people, as I have just shared them with you.

THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, let's turn to another attack on workers. Our entire Constitution had a theme, had a mission statement, and that mission statement was "we the people," government of, by, and for the people. My colleagues might be surprised to discover that the Constitution didn't say "we the privileged; we the wealthy; we the well-connected; we the powerful" because they bring bill after bill to the floor of the Senate that is exactly government of, by, and for the wealthy and the well-connected.

Now we see that the Supreme Court is getting in on the act in this effort to undermine the ability of workers to organize, to get a fair share of the wealth that they create.

Former President Jimmy Carter once said:

Every advance in this half-century—Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education, one after another—came with the support and leadership of American labor.

Well, he was absolutely right. I would also add a few more things to the list, such as 8-hour workdays, the 40-hour workweek, overtime pay, the minimum wage, family and sick leave, health and safety working standards. When workers have organized, they have fought for better conditions for every American—better pay, better safety, better and fair working conditions—and America is a better nation because of it. It is a much better nation because of the men and women of the labor movement who have fought tirelessly to ensure that our country lives up to that "we the people" vision statement. Thanks to their work, an honest day's work means an honest day's pay for millions of Americans. But that is exactly what the Supreme Court is poised to undo. All the powerful and the privileged—they want even more squeezed out of the workers, so they have spent decades really demonizing and attacking the ability of workers to organize.

During the three decades after World War II, workers got a fair share of the wealth they were creating. Their wages went up as productivity went up, and it turned out that this is good for business as well because workers who have paychecks are able to buy products, and then the companies can sell more. The companies do well when people get paid fairly, but that concept is about to be undermined in a massive way with an attack on what are called fair share fees.

When workers organize and bargain for better benefits, there is a cost of developing that organization and conducting those negotiations, and every